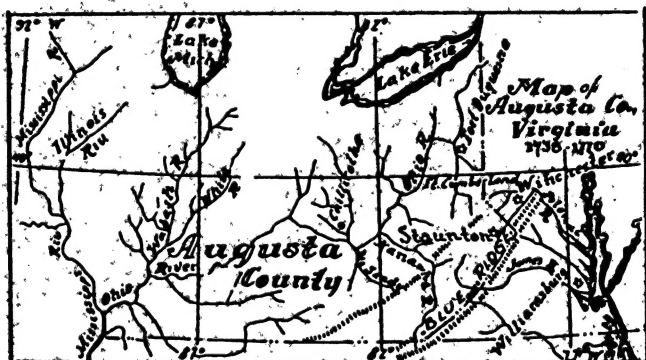


# Augusta Historical Bulletin



JED HOTCHKISS

AUGUSTA COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

VOLUME 35

FALL 1999

NUMBER 2

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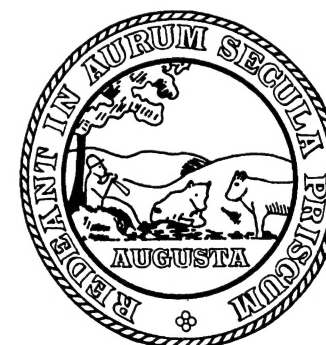
# Augusta Historical Bulletin

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A purpose of the Augusta County Historical Society is to publish  
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# Sources of "The Valley Manuscript": The creation of an historical fiction

by Katie Letcher Lyle<sup>1</sup>

*Presentation delivered for the Augusta County Historical Society spring meeting at Augusta Stone Presbyterian Church, Fort Defiance, May 1999.*

Twelve years ago, I wrote to archivists around the state seeking a diary to edit, by a woman, of any period, either from or connected with Virginia. Although all researchers must learn much at the beginning of any unfamiliar project, I am chagrined to admit the extent of my naivete. Virginia history is an over-worked mine, and if there is gold left at all, it is rare and deeply hidden. Every time I would think I had come upon a treasure, a wonderful diary to edit, or include in a collection, I would subsequently discover that it had already been preserved, which left me feeling like an archaeologist must when he learns that the tomb he has just found was vandalized centuries ago.

Out of the hundred or so diaries I looked at, I was most drawn to one which I found in typescript at the Alderman Library at the University of Virginia, called "The Valley Manuscript" attributed to Margaret Lynn Lewis. It was by a century the oldest diary I found, begun in Ireland in about 1730, and continuing to near the time of the writer's death, which occurred in 1773. This "commonplace book" comprises about twenty-five typed pages, or roughly 7500 words. "The commonplace book of me, Margaret Lynn (nee)<sup>2</sup> Lewis," can be divided roughly into a dozen or so sections, for purposes of discussion. The entries often skip years at a time when, an innocent reader assumes, the writer, occupied in the Herculean task of carving a home out of the wild, raising a family, dealing with Indians and the hardships of daily life, was simply too busy to put pen to paper each day. The account has little of "dailiness" to it, concentrating instead on life's larger events.

Margaret Lynn Lewis, of course, was not some anonymous pioneer (as so many of the diarists were), but locally famous as the first white woman to settle in Augusta County, Virginia. Her claim to fame rests on her being the mother of at least four famous Virginians: Charles and William, Indian fighters and Revolutionary soldiers; Andrew, who achieved fame from his involvement in the Indian Wars and his leadership at the Battle of Point Pleasant in May 1774, which repulsed the Indians all the way to the Ohio River; and Thomas, who became surveyor of Augusta and Greenbrier and a member of the Virginia House of Burgesses. In addition, she bore at least one daughter who survived to adulthood, who was named after her. Margaret Lynn Lewis was, in a romantic sense, the Mother of the Shenandoah Valley; along with her husband John Lewis she actually is the original American ancestor of thousands of Americans living today. At

least two alleged portrait likenesses of her survive, which show her a beautiful woman with dark curly hair, delicate features, and limpid eyes.

The Alderman Library at the University of Virginia received her (typed) diary in 1933, with a headnote calling it an "Extract from the Manuscript Diary:" from Ruth D. Wilson (Mrs. A.F. Wilson). The typescript is signed by Louisa L. Mayer.<sup>3</sup>

The New York Public Library received a typescript (their first) in September 1952 from Mrs. R. H. Knight. It was this copy that got the attention of a bibliographer of women's diaries, for all recent sources, including Arksey and Hinding, all state that the original is in the NYPL. Researchers there, after a thorough search, say that is absolutely not true, and never was. Their version differs insignificantly from the one in Charlottesville.

The account (though it was never a diary—which implies daily writing) puzzled and intrigued me: brief, widely-spaced episodes of life in the wilderness. People and places were named that I knew about: Mary Greenlee, the first white woman settler in Rockbridge. She lived to be 106, wore men's leggings and rode bareback, and at 100 carried bricks to build a house. She was a woman apparently so outrageous that she was once accused of witchcraft.<sup>4</sup> John Peter Sallings is mentioned, whose capture by the Indians he himself recorded in a diary; Benjamin Borden, on whose land grant my town of Lexington, Virginia was built; John Craig, born in Scotland, founder and pastor for many years of Augusta Stone Church, the first in the Shenandoah Valley, and mentor to another strange character I've followed, called Selim the Algerine. Polly Mulhollin appears, another famous colonial figure, and perhaps America's first transvestite.

Questions have existed for a long time as to the diary's authenticity, but apparently no one has proven the diary's provenance, so I decided to attempt that task, seduced by an unsolved mystery.

The first reason its authenticity is in question may be that, prior to its first appearance in print in 1869, there is no trace, of the diary. There is a curious possible reference in Henry Howe's *Historical Collections of Virginia*, published in 1845, to what could have been the diary, to ... "a narrative of the circumstances connected with the settlement of Augusta county, by the Lewis family, collected from authentic records, and traditions of the family, and communicated for this work by a gentleman of the county."<sup>5</sup> Alongside this reference is indication of Mrs. Lewis's son Thomas's son Thomas, being alive. As he was killed on or about November 4, 1800, in a horseback riding accident, this appears to date the aforementioned "narrative" to before that date.

Except for this single reference, none of the Virginia historians writing between 1773, when Margaret Lynn Lewis died, and 1869, the premier appearance and attribution of "The Valley Manuscript," mentions the existence of a Lewis diary. Sons Charles and Andrew kept journals at various times,<sup>6</sup> and Margaret Lynn is generally described as cultivated and educated, so quite possibly she was literate, but in fact no source mentions any kind of diary by a woman in the Lewis family, though the family is prominently and colorfully mentioned in all the early histories of Virginia, the Valley of Virginia, and Augusta County.

Some would doubt purely on the basis of chance. Even if Margaret Lynn Lewis were literate, unlikely in the eighteenth century, probably frontier women were too busy to keep diaries. Further, diary-keeping, while modish in New En-



gland, never was especially popular in Virginia until the Civil War. Very few Virginia manuscripts of any kind from before 1800 have survived. The Indians burnt down cabins; the vicissitudes of our tidewater sub-tropical climate destroyed papers. And of course Richmond, where so many of the state's legal records and valuable documents had been sent for safekeeping, was leveled by fire during the Civil War. All of these are further reasons to doubt that the so-called diary of Margaret Lynn Lewis could be genuine.

Copies of this diary have made their way around to kinfolk, presumably first copies in longhand, then typescripts from the longhand copies, and finally and most recently, photocopies. Libraries around the country have received from various descendants of Margaret Lynn Lewis versions of the diary, which differ in minor ways.

In a majority of early diaries, the sentence structure is as a general rule remarkably graceful, the grammar without flaw, —but spelling and punctuation are other matters entirely. Sentences often run into each other without acknowledgment, commas frequently replace periods, dashes replace both commas and periods, capitalization is erratic, spelling is inconsistent or phonetic, or both. One remote possibility had to be considered: Howe's strange attribution of "information" to a male member of the Lewis family and the similarity of material in the diary to material in Howe could (though it is unlikely) argue for an earlier prototype which was available to both writers—Howe and Margaret Lynn Lewis — at different times.

Because every version extant today paragraphs the diary differently, any original, in the most unlikely event that there was one, was probably not paragraphed at all, but jammed together, —. This is the largest discrepancy of all, and it might have been a clue to the authenticity of the diary. In the first place, paper was very scarce in the eighteenth century, and early in the account the writer of *The Valley Manuscript* mentions that she is writing between the lines of an old account book of her husband's. Paragraphing wastes space, so I concluded that possibly she did not paragraph. Thus, working backwards from the typed scripts of the diary (all of which appear to have been somewhat edited—that is, arranged in paragraphs, and with spellings corrected), we must admit the possibility that Howe and Lewis had access to the same manuscript, or even that Howe saw Margaret Lynn Lewis's genuine diary.

In the absence of the artifact, the diary itself, "once used by John Lewis for his tenants' records" some will say there can be no final verdict on the diary's authenticity, only opinion.

However —no matter how charming the fiction that Margaret Lynn Lewis kept this pioneer diary, it is only a fiction. The truth is somewhat different. Here is what really happened: sometime in 1868, a Norfolk novelist, Fanny Fielding, submitted a fictional piece called "The Valley Manuscript" to *The Land We Love*, a monthly magazine of the reconstructed South devoted to "Literature, Military History, and Agriculture."

She wrote it in longhand, as typewriters would not be available for five more years at the very least.<sup>8</sup> A one-sentence headnote beneath the title, of the sort common to nineteenth century fiction, designed to lead the reader gently from the real world into the fictional, has apparently led people ever since to believe the piece is a genuine eighteenth century diary.

Even historians who have recognized that the diary is probably fraudulent have not been specific in their accusations. In 1976, historian Mary Beth Norton wrote a letter to the *William and Mary Quarterly*,<sup>9</sup> warning historians to "exercise extreme caution" in using the Lewis "commonplace book," as "the diary is almost too good," and the "diction and phraseology have an eighteenth-century feel, and topics are not treated anachronistically or out of context." Clearly she believes it to be fraudulent, yet offers no proof.

Though Miss Fielding's charming story is skillfully done, it is not, alas, the genuine diary of Margaret Lynn Lewis. Nor was it ever Miss Fielding's intention to present it as such. Nor is it her fault that it has been subsequently misunderstood. From Fielding's pieces in other issues of the same magazine, it is obvious that history interested her. Popular at the time of her story's publication were a number of Virginia histories written between 1773 (the date of Margaret Lynn Lewis's death) and 1869, when the story appeared, and it is clear that these histories provided much of the material in the story: in fact, I am sorry to say, substantially all of it. Miss Fielding in fact concocted a "commonplace book" out of four or five historical sources, and did so creditable a job that many of Mrs. Lewis's descendants and other admirers of the piece remain to this day convinced that this is a true diary of their biological or cultural ancestor.

Fanny Fielding's pieces appeared often in *The Land We Love*, sentimental stories and articles about grand houses of the Old Dominion, including Belmead, Shirley, and Vacluse.<sup>10</sup> *The Valley Manuscript* is a charming fiction based on histories available at the time, which is all it has ever laid claim to being.

The piece first saw light in the January, 1869, issue of *The Land We Love*, edited by General D. H. Hill, Fanny Fielding<sup>11</sup> listed as the author of the piece in the table of contents: "The Valley Manuscript," it says, "By Fanny Fielding." (My italics.) Surely that should be enough for general attribution.

But it was the headnote that appears to have been responsible for the mischief that has occurred since. Beneath the title is the parenthetical statement: "From a collection of archives known in our household by the above title, from which I have recently been making excerpts, I take the liberty of sending you the following:"

Nineteenth century novelists often offered their romances as fact, their fictions as documents. Washington Irving (1783-1859) had been dead ten years at the time "The Valley Manuscript" appeared, and his works enjoyed enormous popularity. Thus it is highly probable that any contemporary writer would have known his work. And in fact, he began his most famous story, "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow," with the following headnote: "Found among the papers of the late Diedrich Knickerbocker." (Diedrich Knickerbocker was a pseudonymous creation of Washington Irving who reportedly wrote "Diedrich Knickerbocker's History of New York.") The headnotes are actually so similar that one might wonder if Irving's was not Fielding's prototype.

Nathaniel Hawthorne, whose *Scarlet Letter* was the American mid-nineteenth-century bestseller, took pains to convince readers of the factuality of his novel, with the long introductory section, entitled "The Custom House," comprising about twenty percent of the book, and preceding the tale of Hester Prynne, Roger Chillingsworth, and Arthur Dimmesdale. In it Hawthorne claimed to have discovered "half a dozen sheets of foolscap" and the actual embroidered scarlet

A which Mrs. Prynne wore to her death, "precisely three inches and a quarter in length." There are hundreds more examples, in books on both sides of the Atlantic throughout the nineteenth century. Fanny Fielding was squarely in this tradition.

Another argument against this being anything more than a fictional piece is that a thorough search of both families reveals no familial connection at all; that is, the real Fanny Fielding (Mary Jane Stith Upshur Sturges) was almost certainly not kin to Margaret Lynn Lewis, making the headnote seem more likely than ever to be merely a literary convention.

The concept of plagiarism may have been different then than it is now. In folklore, for example, the unit of material "allowable" to plagiarists has probably always been larger than for the literary world. A folksinger has traditionally been able to change just a few words of a song, then claim the authorship of the song for himself. It is fair, if not kind, to say that by modern standards "The Valley Manuscript" is largely plagiarized, even to whole sentences. It is, in addition, possible to say, at this late date, what current historical sources Miss Fielding failed to see.

Henry Howe's *Historical Collections of Virginia* (1845) was one of Miss Fielding's two chief sources. From it she got the use of, instead of Mc, before the Scotch-Irish names, the odd M', so that McCutcheon becomes M'Cutcheon, and McNutt, M'Nutt. Clearly, her second major source is Charles Campbell's *History of the Colony and Ancient Dominion of Virginia* (1847). The Lewis family configuration used by Fielding follows Howe and Campbell. Other common sources, including an official genealogy, mentions son Samuel, who may have been killed at Braddock's Defeat, and a second daughter, Anne.<sup>12</sup> In fact, John Lewis's grave marker in Augusta County says that he "gave five sons to the Revolution." Campbell employs a word that Fielding later adopted, so odd that it stands out sharply from both texts: it is the word "prairie," familiar enough to Americans, but not commonly, not even occasionally, outside of Campbell (and later, Fielding) used to describe the fields of the Shenandoah Valley.

Briefly, "The Valley Manuscript" begins with the story of the Huguenot Lewises leaving Ireland, the famous stopover for so many early Scots Presbyterians. Margaret, the narrator, recalls the "castle splendor" of her childhood on the shores of Loch Lynn.<sup>13</sup> It relates the death of the Lord of Clonmithgairn at her provoked husband's hand, "My poor John is sorely belabored in soul with the grievous malice of this same Lord of Clonmithgairn. The contentious noble hath said to the good Dean of Ulster, a few nights ago, how that my husband's leasehold on the estates of Clonmithgairn and Dundery should be revoked at next assizes, or (and he took a vile oath!) blood should be spilt between the contenders." and explains that she is keeping the "Common-Place Book" as a "nest for (her) soul's repose," in a book which at one time "served John Lewis for his tenantry accounts." Fielding follows both Howe and Campbell in noting eldest son Thomas's poor eyesight. In other sources contemporaneous with Howe and Campbell, Margaret Lynn is shot through the hand in the affray before her good husband runs afoul of the law and kills his landlord, but neither Campbell nor Howe mentioned this detail, though Howe stated that she was wounded. Evidently, Fielding made up the name "Edward" for the brother of John Lewis, In fact, Lewis had two brothers, named Charles and Samuel, but none named Edward. In the diary, the narrator says her husband has been to Portugal, but has returned to Ireland for her. No historical account has the Lewis history happen-

ing in this way, but relates instead how he settled in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, and sent for her and the children to join him there, as he was fearful for his life should he be apprehended on Irish soil. The final paragraph of this section in "The Valley Manuscript" plagiarizes wholesale from Howe when it states, "When the right circumstances of the affray were made known..." [Lewis was pardoned].

The account next moves to Virginia, where the Lewises' cow "Snow-drop"'s white feet are "continually dyed red with wild strawberries" in the "Eden Valley of Virginia," echoing Howe's comment that John Lewis introduced the red clover into the country. They have brought servants along from Ireland; Howe's phrase "a band of about thirty of his faithful tenantry" is echoed by Fielding's "about thirty of our tenantry."

The fictional Margaret Lynn Lewis, as had Charles Campbell, quotes Pascal, "Most of the evil of this world grows out of people's discontent to stay at home." There follows in the diary a courtship between daughter Alice and a young Indian.

"Oroon-ah, or Tiger-King's son, a lad of sixteen, has crowned my Alice with a prairie rose wreath—Queen of White Doves, he calls her, and has given her a fawn which has become domestic now...Oroon-ah came by while the children and I set the plants by our cottage. He shook his head. 'Wrong,' he said, 'the Great Spirit put the herbs where he want um;' and when Alice brought him a bowl of clabber he turned away in great disgust, the while uttering—'Rotten! no good!' The child gets used to him and the other Indians better than I ever shall."<sup>14</sup>

Following this section,<sup>15</sup> is a retelling of the well-known meeting of Lewis and Benjamin Burden (or Borden) in Williamsburg with Governor Gooch, and Borden's gift to Gooch of a buffalo calf caught by the Lewis boys.<sup>16</sup>

Folklore has it that it was this calf which caused the governor to look with such generosity on Borden, and to grant him the huge tract which today comprises a large part of Rockbridge County. Fielding's wording is embarrassingly close to Howe's.

Withers' *Chronicles of Border Warfare*, published in 1831, is a possible source. Withers observed that Lewis "would accompany (Mackey) to hunt buffalo. The former amassed a large estate, while the latter lived and died in comparative poverty." Miss Fielding did not necessarily see Withers, however, for Henry Howe also noted that John Mackey "...died as he had lived, a poor hunter." Fielding's description of the Lewises' fort is copied directly out of Howe: "...block-houses, stockades, and the cabins...ten to twelve feet high. The block houses are built at the angles of the fort and project full two feet beyond the outer walls of the cabin and stockades."

Samuel Kercheval's *A History of the Valley of Virginia* (1833) is certainly Miss Fielding's source for wedding customs described in the next section of the diary: in fact, she paraphrased the entire event; "large slab of timber" upon which the wedding feast was laid became "rude board" but the theft is evident. Both Kercheval and Fielding describe a race for a bottle of whiskey; "hill and dale" changes to "Hill and glen" and "steeple-chase becomes "English fox chase," but in both, "Black Betty" is mentioned, and the wording is similar enough that there is no doubt that Fielding plagiarized from Kercheval.

The wedding of "Joe Naseby's grand-daughter" follows, straight out of Kercheval.

This episode is followed directly by the oft-told story of the eccentric Polly Mulhollin who, in order to accumulate land, dressed as a man and erected many cabins on the Borden grant land before being found out, when she apparently returned quite without protest to womanly pastimes. The erection of a cabin on the grant guaranteed a man 100 acres of land. Fielding related the Mulhollin episode nearly word for word as it had appeared in Withers.

Following this tale is a small anecdote about some mischief perpetrated by one of the narrator's children (Thomas) and one of her grandchildren, (Thomas's son Edward) at the end of which the narrator remarks, with coy self-effacement, "but I thought next, Satan comes to him by rightful heritage from his grandmother..." The historical Mrs. Lewis's son Thomas, although he fathered thirteen children, named not a single one Edward.

Mrs. Lewis's daughter "Alice" is next kidnapped from a picnic at Tower Rocks by a love-sick Indian, for whom she has just played skillfully on the spinnette.<sup>17</sup>

Here an interesting juxtaposition can be noted: on the page in Howe facing the description of the Lewis family, appears a lithograph of an unusual rock formation in Augusta County known as the Cyclopean Towers, known today as Natural Chimneys.

Continuing, pioneer Mary Greenlee volunteers to rescue Alice, if Mrs. Lewis will give her a horse. Charles Campbell mentioned that Mary Greenlee was believed by many to have been a witch, as did Miss Fielding, and commented, as Fielding also did, on her erect posture on horseback at an advanced age. In the manuscript Mrs. Greenlee "talks wildly of the palace under the earth" in which Alice (known to the Indians as "White Dove") is held captive." Alice is returned, apparently none the worse for having been either scalped or shaved, Fielding simply remarking that she has a "bald head". Alice then regales her family with tales of some marvelous underground palace, sounding suspiciously like Howe's description of Weyer's Cave (which was not discovered until 1804). Fielding wrote, "I tell Alice she has become daft, what with her capture and reading of the Arabian Nights, for she talks of the grand marble palace under ground, of its interminable galleries, its statues and its fountains, and withal of stars and moon peering through its roof..."

Here is the way Howe described Weyer's Cave: "There is a fine sheet of rock-work running up the centre of this room and giving it the aspect of two separate and noble galleries, till you look above and observe...the fine arch...the form and drapery of a gigantic statue....The fine perspective of this room, the numerous tapers...appearing in their various attitudes like twinkling stars on a deep dark heaven..." Howe's description of Weyer's Cave, with "twinkling stars and moon" furthermore appears *on the page following* his description of the Lewis family.

When Fanny Fielding decided to invent this diary as a piece of fiction, she might well have got the idea of the kidnapping of young Alice Lewis, and her captivity in a large cavern, from this description, as its similarity to Howe's description of the cave known today as Grand Caverns is far too close to be coincidental. Further, Howe described the captivity of Hannah Dennis by Indians elsewhere in the book, and various tales of Indian captivity are related in all the histories of the time.

Howe related the marvelous tale of Charles Lewis who once, when cap-

tured by Indians, broke his bonds "by intense muscular force," according to Fielding, ("by strong muscular exertion" is the way Howe put it), leapt over a log and fell right down next to it, only to find a huge rattlesnake coiled to strike at his head. By utter immobility, he fooled the snake into thinking he was dead. Fielding related this story a dozen years later in nearly identical fashion.

Finally an old woman, Mrs. Lewis made one last entry in her commonplace book, telling how the lovesick Indian lad, dying young, recanted his heathenish religion at the end, for love of Alice, and became Christian. In this, her final entry, John Lewis is dead, as are her sons Andrew and Charles, but she, ever the patriot, will spare not even her other sons should they be needed in the cause of freedom. Henry Howe quoted the historical Mrs. Lewis, "with the firmness of a Roman matron" (Miss Fielding changed it to "Roman mother")—as saying, "I spare not my youngest, my fair-haired boy, the comfort of my declining years, I devote you all to my country. Keep back the invader's foot from the soil of Augusta..." In this theft, Miss Fielding did not change a word.

Miss Fielding plagiarized from Howe further in a footnote describing how delighted was George Washington to hear Mrs. Lewis's words that he exclaimed, "Leave me but a banner to plant upon the mountains of Augusta, and I will rally around me the men who will lift our bleeding country from the dust and set her free." Nothing is changed, not a word.

Fielding ends—"—only a little longer, John Lewis, and the Lord of the mountain will open unto us and we enter his doors together."

But there are some historical sources that Miss Fielding missed. An important source which Miss Fielding clearly did not have was the *Virginia Historical Register* of 1851, which recounts an early episode in the Lewises' lives: a dramatic confrontation between the young John Lewis in Ireland and his landlord: "About the period of the birth of their third son—the Lord from whom he had obtained his lease—a landlord beloved by his tenants and neighbours suddenly died, and his estates descended to his eldest son, a youth whose principles were directly the reverse of his father's." Faced with a hefty rent increase, Lewis refused to pay. Determined to right this injustice, Lewis visited the lord's castle, but was refused an interview with the lord. Walking past the porter, Lewis confronted the young man, "flushed with wine," and his roomful of ne'er-do-well friends, who jeered Lewis down. But he persisted, made his speech coolly. The lord roared at him to leave. Lewis replied, "Sir, you may save yourself this useless ebullition of passion. It is extremely silly and ridiculous." He then left, dignity intact. The very next day, the angry lord attacked Lewis's house with a posse of his roguish friends, and among other insults, shot Margaret Lynn Lewis through the hand, thus arousing Lewis' fury, whereupon Lewis seized his shelalah, and brained both the lord and his steward. He was then an outlaw, forced to flee, disguised as a woman, and take passage on a ship at a nearby port, whence he traveled upon "various adventures" and "in different countries" before arriving in Portugal in 1729. From there he traveled to Philadelphia, and after a year was joined by his family. Learning that the lord was still in hot pursuit, he fled to Lancaster, Pennsylvania, where he spent over a year before removing to Augusta, west of the Virginia mountains, to absolute wilderness.

Surely Fanny Fielding, Norfolk socialite whose chief known contributions to literature consisted of flowery descriptions of Virginia's great houses, replete



with dialect quotes from old faithful retainers and some overwritten patriotic verse, would, had she seen it, not have let this wonderful anecdote get away.

William Henry Foote, D.D, in his *Sketches of Virginia, Second Series*, 1855, was another common source that Fanny Fielding did not use, for Foote quotes an interesting bit from John Craig's *Autobiography*, that Fielding surely would have used had she come across it, as John Craig is a character in her story: "A difference happened between Colonel John Lewis and Colonel James Patton, both living in that congregation which was hurtful to the settlement, but especially to me. I could neither bring them to friendship with each other, or obtain both their friendships at once ever after. This continued for thirteen or fourteen years, till Colonel Patton was murdered by the Indians. At that time he was friendly with me. After his death, Colonel Lewis was friendly with me till he died..." Again, here is the stuff of drama that Fielding, I believe, would have made use of had she only seen it!

The fictional piece entitled "The Valley Manuscript" has been reprinted in dozens of newspapers and magazines, often with misleading introductions or explanatory notes, wild claims of the original's existence in such far-flung places as Staunton, Virginia, and New York City. Typescripts have found their ways into scores of libraries. For instance, on December 22, 1931, The Lexington (Virginia) *Gazette* printed "The Valley Manuscript" claiming that "the original manuscript, now almost exactly two hundred years old, is said to be yet in existence, and in the possession of one of the Lewis descendants living in Lewisburg, West Virginia."

In July, 1936, The Historical Society of Northwestern Ohio in Toledo printed the *Commonplace Book* with no reference to its authenticity.<sup>18</sup> A descendant of Margaret Lynn Lewis, Mrs. Anne Menzies Spears, authorized the publication.

In March 1940, a Salem, Virginia, newspaper man, H. E. Van Gelder, printed privately a booklet containing a version of the commonplace book and some historical notes. Of its authenticity, Van Gelder writes with restraint: "...if Miss Fielding had as a basis some original writings by Margaret Lewis, she had no doubt liberally interwoven those with excerpts from other historical writers of later date."

William Oliver Stevens, in *The Shenandoah and its Byways*, 1941, stated that Mrs. Lewis "kept a private record, which she called her Book of Comfort because she could ease her heart and mind..."

Julia Davis, in *The Shenandoah*, in 1945, wrote that "A version of this diary has survived, probably not in its original form, and yet so packed with detail which other records corroborate that it cannot be dismissed as wholly spurious."

At some date prior to 1951, when the Virginia Historical Society acquired a copy, Andrew Price, long-time editor of the *Pocahontas Times* in Marlinton, West Virginia, printed the diary privately as a small book with an introduction that fiercely defends the diary as authentic by pointing out the historical accuracy of the events described. It must not have occurred to Price that the most amateur researcher could have discovered those facts in half a dozen histories of Augusta County printed after the death of Mrs. Lewis in 1773, but prior to 1869, when the "The Valley Manuscript" first appeared in print.

*Think Magazine* printed the diary with no disclaimer in September of 1953, apparently reviving the story so that the *Staunton News-Leader* reprinted some parts of the diary from *that* source on October 18, 1953, the *Lexington*

*Gazette* followed suit that same month, and perhaps other valley newspapers did too.

The Fanny Bayly King Public Library in Staunton, Virginia, received a typescript on February 24, 1969, which ends with the typed comment, "...so endeth my great-Grandmother's Manuscript, Louisa L. Mayor." It is interesting to note that the spelling differs from a previous spelling of the same name.

In 1976 the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the Commonwealth of Virginia printed, or in their word, "compiled" the diary as a bicentennial project. The foreword calls it "a dramatic and poignant story of Margaret Lynn Lewis," neatly sidestepping the authenticity issue. However, a letter printed in the book from the Duke of Argyll, Scotland, claims that "this copy was made ...from the original which I believe to be lodged in the Historical Museum at Richmond," thus implying that it is authentic.<sup>19</sup> In *The Family of John Lewis, Pioneer, Revised*,<sup>20</sup> the authors decline to damn the authenticity of the "diary" directly, but evidently believe it fraudulent.

At least one novel, privately printed, has been made out of the diary. In 1981, Sarah Jane Swartz reprinted the diary with minor changes, but adding that 1851 Va. Historical Register story. *By Courage Not By Craft* amounts to awkward plagiarism of a Norfolk woman's own plagiarism of historical sources, and draws, as its sole original contribution to Fielding, from the exciting account of John Lewis's dramatic break with the old world printed in the *Virginia Historical Register* of 1851.

Circumstances, it may also be supposed, fed the fraud. As the typewriter was not invented until 1868, nor marketed until 1874, so Fanny Fielding's manuscript, for such it had to be in 1869, *could* be floating around somewhere, in her own handwriting (Fielding's, not Lewis's), still exciting and confounding searchers. But until 1874 at the earliest, the only way a paper could be shared was by copying it out in longhand. This piece obviously *was* shared, leading inevitably to misreadings of other peoples' handwritings. What appears as "Once" in most of the typescripts appears in one as "Duce." The word "nest" is sometimes rendered as "rest," and Clonmithgairn is spelled, just in the variants I have collected, five different ways. "Tower Rocks" reads "Lower Rocks" in one version, and "7 over rocks" in another; Clonmell is spelled Clenwell, Clonwall, and Clonmel. The phrase "have sleight" in some versions is "have five leight" in others. Even sentence structure is different in the different texts. The original version, the one in the magazine, reads "...cheery, and careless-like, but faithful Nora, she sees it is not in my heart.", whereas another reads, "...cheery and careless like, but faithful. Nora, she sees it is not in my heart." "Style ordate" in the original reads "style or date" in some versions, and "style ornate" in some. In one typescript, the word "kitar" appears; but in all the others it is rendered "guitar". There are many other minor discrepancies of this sort. Variations in paragraphing occur as suited the copiers. Then later, most certainly typographical errors occurred. Finally, there was confusion over which was the definitive version; and throughout the years, it was gradually forgotten by its admirers that the piece first appeared in January 1869, set in print definitively, from a handwritten original.

So the reasons for doubt are (1) the great time lapse between the claimed writing (1730-1773) and the appearance of the diary, nearly a century later; (2) dates and facts that do not jibe with known events, specifically the kidnapping of

Alice, and her age; (3) the plagiaristic use of sources readily available to Fielding; and (4) certain stylistic matters that betray this piece as a nineteenth century creation, such as "nee" which the OED traces only to 1815—though it was popular in newspapers throughout the nineteenth century.

Finally, the words *manuscript* and *typescript* have been treated as synonyms, thus adding to the confusion. Family members' notes attached to *typescripts* speak of copies of "the *manuscript* made from my grandmother's *manuscript*..."

But if there is anyone still unconvinced, there is a final proof. The narrator of the piece states, in what she says is 1737: "Our town of Staunton goes finely on, thanks to John Lewis' enterprise and energy. It shall descend to his posterity that he has builded the first town in the valley. It is about four miles from our place of Beverly Masson here, which some call Lewis' Fort." In fact, the town of Staunton was not named or laid out until 1749.<sup>21</sup>

How wonderful it would be if this piece were really the diary of Margaret Lynn Lewis! For we have no extant Virginia women's diaries that early, no first-hand accounts of what it was like to be a woman in Augusta County when it was still wilderness. It would be a treasure indeed were it authentic. Although it is perhaps sad that no diary so early exists for us to read and learn from, it is probably useful to know the truth about this small controversial piece of fiction whose roots lie in the nineteenth century, and not in the eighteenth.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Katie Letcher Lyle is the author of twelve books including poetry, novels, historical non-fiction, and nature books, as well as many articles. Her short fiction has appeared in many magazines, including *Viva*, *Shendandoah*, and *The Virginia Quarterly Review*. A writer, teacher, and speaker, she taught twenty-five years at Southern Seminary College, has taught intermittently in the graduate Writing Program at Hollins College, and been adjunct professor at Washington and Lee University and Randolph-Macon Woman's College. Since 1983 she has taught in more than seventy Elderhostels at several colleges. She is active in organizations that serve the handicapped. She lives with her family in Lexington, Virginia.

<sup>2</sup>"Nee" meaning "born" is a nineteenth, not an eighteenth century, usage.

<sup>3</sup>In another letter, which I did not see for several months, is a letter from the same Mrs. Wilson dated 31 August 1933, which states that "Since June we have learned that this so-called day-book is wholly fictitious...If you find out why or by whom this was written I should be very much interested to learn about it." There is no record that the library staff answered her.

<sup>4</sup>Dr. E. Pendleton Tompkins, M.D. of Lexington, in an undated column from *The Lexington Gazette* from the 1930s, relates that Mary Greenlee, "in a story that might be apocryphal," helped out a neighbor whose child had been stolen by Indians. "She made the Father this offer: 'If you will give me a good horse, a saddle and bridle, I will go and endeavor to recover the child, upon the condition that the horse, saddle and bridle are to be mine, if successful.'" She mounted the horse, and after six weeks or more caught up with the Indians in what is now Kentucky, and "induced" the Indians to return the child. I have not found an earlier source for this anecdote.

<sup>5</sup>Henry Howe, *Historical Collections of Virginia*, 1845, 181.

<sup>6</sup>The Lyman C. Draper Collection on microfilm at Washington and Lee University in Lexington, Va., #U23. Also *Memoir of Indian Wars, and Other Occurrences*, by John Stuart (1833), reprinted in 1971 by McClain Printing, Parsons, West Virginia. Stuart was a great-nephew of Margaret Lynn Lewis.

<sup>7</sup>All quotes are from the original version printed in *The Land We Love* in January 1869.

<sup>8</sup>It is conceivable that, after being set in print, the manuscript was returned to Miss Fielding and thus began its journey to a wrongful fame.

<sup>9</sup>*William and Mary Quarterly*, No. 33, Third Series, letter from Mary Beth Norton, 1976.

<sup>10</sup>Two months later, in March of 1869, it merged with *The New Eclectic*, which then continued out of Baltimore as *Southern Magazine*, beginning in 1871.

<sup>11</sup>A pseudonym of Mary Jane Stith Upshur, who married Josiah Sturges in 1870.

<sup>12</sup>*The Family of John Lewis, Pioneer*, by Irvin Frazier, San Marino, California, 1960.

<sup>13</sup>Irvin Frazier casts doubts upon there ever having existed a Loch Lynn. He wrote that certainly there never was a castle in a place called Clonmel on Loch Lynn.

<sup>14</sup>In this section, Fielding wrote, "I did not like to hear Thomas say last night—he is older than Omayah,—suppose sister Alice should grow up and marry Omayah. Youth is romantic and thinks strange thoughts." The word *romantic* had no such usage in the eighteenth century, and came to refer to matters of the heart only fairly late in the nineteenth century.

<sup>15</sup>Margaret Lynn Lewis's daughter called "Alice" passed her fourteenth birthday during the course of the narrative, soon after the diarist had chanced to mention the current year 1737. That makes Alice's birthyear 1723, but the real daughter of Margaret Lynn Lewis was born in 1726, according to Frazier.

<sup>16</sup>All versions of this story name one of the hunters as Samuel, the son Fielding omitted. Withers and Howe say Samuel and Andrew. Apparently Fanny Fielding ignored or overlooked this inconsistency.

<sup>17</sup>I would not be the first to notice that it seems most unlikely that there could have been a spinnette in the wilderness of Virginia in the 1730s or 1740s.

<sup>18</sup>*The Historical Society of Northwestern Ohio in Toledo*, July, 1936, Bulletin No. 3, Volume 8.

<sup>19</sup>There are fourteen archives or repositories in Richmond, and none of them has anything claiming to be an original of this diary. In fact, several politely and helpfully suggested that I look in one or several of the others.

<sup>20</sup>Compiled by Irvin Frazier, Text by Mark W. Cowell, Jr., Edited by Lewis F. Fisher. Revised edition, 1985. Fisher Publications Inc., San Antonio.

<sup>21</sup>Augusta County Deed Book 2 1748-1750, 410.

# The memoirs of Margaret Tirzah Willson Patterson

by Patricia Mack Churchman  
Bridgewater, Virginia

These memoirs were written in 1920 when the writer, Margaret Tirzah Willson Patterson, was seventy-seven years old. She was my great-grandmother on my mother's side of the family. Born in 1843 in Stuarts Draft, Virginia, in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia, she was a beautiful young girl with brown hair and dark eyes. She was from a family of nine children. The lure of gold in California took her brother Matthew away when she was three years old. "I have been repeatedly told he was the handsomest man in the county," she said.

In 1862 she married William Brown Patterson who was born and raised near Harriston, about four miles from Stuarts Draft. The couple had three children: John Blackwood, Brown Craig, and Bettie Evans Patterson. It was their son, Brown Craig, my grandfather, through his interest in history and genealogy, who prevailed upon his mother to write her early recollections. I have never seen her original journal, but this account was typed by my grandfather from the original.

Also included in this account are several letters and a newspaper clipping found in my great-grandmother's effect. The letters seem to be the only ones that remain from the time of the Civil War. While reading this account, it must be remembered that Tirzah was a product of the antebellum South and the thoughts and pronouncements made by her and her family should not be judged by 1999 standards.

Tirzah's memoirs recall antebellum life in Augusta County. "My father had a large house and barn located west of the Stuarts Draft crossroads which was often used as a stopping place for travelers. In the autumn great droves of cattle and turkeys would pass and just before Christmas, bands of 50 or 60 negroes from the furnaces would pass on their way to eastern Virginia for the holiday. The latter heralded their coming with songs and banjoes.

"My father was a large man, wonderfully kind; so well read too. He insisted on us reading worthwhile books and when we were quite young he gave us the six volume *Reformation History* by Daubigne! His only punishment was—'children be quiet or I'll call your mother. . . ' He was in the War of 1812, but saw no fighting."

When Tirzah was thirteen and her sister Mary fifteen, her mother died. "The saddest of all sorrows had come to us. We kept house turn about for two years. Our neighbors were kind to us and Mrs. Johnson, who lived near us, came with a basket of eggs and helped us to serve the table for the local election judges." She also mentions that she enjoyed sleigh rides, picnics, and young men callers, among them her future husband, Brown Patterson.

She goes on to speak of the illness of a young "colored" girl, Amanda, who

"was taken sick." They brought her in by the fire, and one evening, she asked what she must do to be saved. Tirzah had never spoken of such matters, but they recited the hymn "Just As I Am Without One Plea."

"Now came rumbling notes of the Civil War. The Abolitionists were busy in the North causing great prejudice and enmity against the South, heaping odium and infamy upon us, not remembering that when they could not use the negro they sent him to the South, and that the North built and manned nearly every slave ship in the American seas. The South was very patient, she had been slowly lifting the Africans from barbarism to Christianity and we looked forward in our own good time to emancipating them."

She writes that the years of 1857 to 1860 were all colored by an overwhelming interest in Union or Disunion and its complication with slavery. "We knew we had the right to secede for in 1788 when Virginia accepted the Constitution she reserved the right of secession. Then came the news of the John Brown trouble. I am sure one of his emissaries, maybe John B. himself stayed with us one night. He claimed to be a preacher and looked exactly as one might picture John B. to look. We suspected the man was here for no good purpose. . . when he talked a long time with our negro man who went to his room for some service.

"... With what intense interest we watched every movement, North and South. The North thought the South a braggart, a cowardly and effeminate set of bullies. They had occasion to change their mind. I was well posted in politics. My father took many papers, one a large Washington paper called *The National*. I read every speech made in Congress. Some were friendly to the South and others were bitter. I was always glad to find one from a Mr. Vorhees of Illinois. We youngsters had been singing songs on 'Union Forever' and later it was 'Maryland, My Maryland.' My brothers all volunteered. Brother John was killed in the second year of the war in the Battle of Kernstown near Winchester.(1) In that battle his command received the name of 'Stonewall' from General Jackson's pointing to them and saying, 'See, they stand like a stone wall.' (2) Before going into battle brother John took his watch and purse and giving them to a friend said, prophetically, 'I will not come out of this.' We were sorry not to have gotten his sword. He was a lieutenant and carried a most beautiful sword. My father died the day after brother John was killed, so we could not send for the body. I visited the country in Winchester a short while ago and found his grave beautifully kept, with a small marble slab marked John W. Willson."

Found among Tirzah's letters was one from her brother, John, written from "Near Winchester, November 16th, 1861."

My dear Sister,

I received your kind letter this morning and was glad to hear from you and all the rest. We left Centerville last Friday evening and got to this place Saturday evening. We had to travel all the time in the rain. It was a hard day's rain. We had to lay on the wet ground that night. I have a cot that keeps me off the ground, butt I was wet to the skin. I could ring the water out of my stockings. It was as hard a time as it was a week or two ago our Regiment was on Picket. 3 compneys went out to stand at a time. I was one of them. We had to stand 24 hours at a time. We were on the outposts. It commenced raining at dark and all knight. The next day we had not a thing to shelter us at all. That was a hard





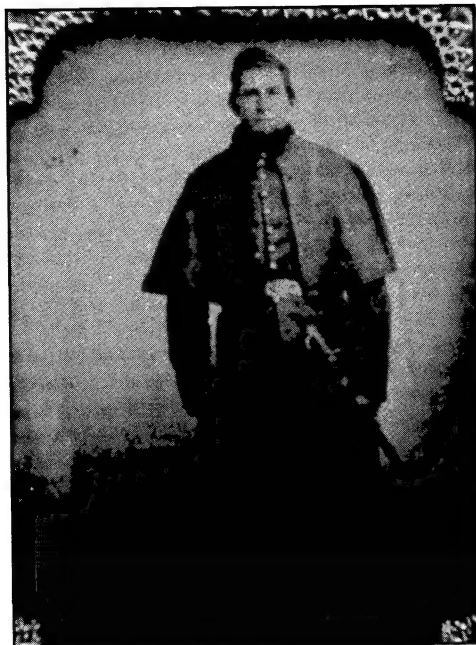
*Margaret Tirzah Willson Patterson poses for a photograph in her later years. In 1920, at the urging of her son, she wrote her memoirs of life in antebellum Augusta County and during the Civil War.*

time. When we was relieved we had know shelter. We got in the woods to cut down big trees to built a log fire. I slep in a wagon that knight. I bought a quart of whiskey that evening. Had to give \$2.00 for it. We have a damp place here. I do not know how long we will stay here. Not long I think. You told me that Pa was sick. I hope he is not bad. You said that Pa was going up to see about me coming home, but it is not worthwhile for they will not let me off and they may put me in ranks. I will not like that. Tell him not to try it at all. I will try and stay my time out. I like to be here if things are going on. At home if you want Rachel next year you must let me know. She will have to go somewhere if she does not want to stay there. You can get Mary or Amanda. Please let me know soon. John I. Larue will have the binding of them out. If Mary comes she can bring her little girl with her. I will stop for this time. My hands are getting cold, so that I can hardly write. Tell David he must write to me and not wait on me. Direct your letters to Winchester in care of Capt. Newton 5 Regment Va. Vol. Your Brother, John W. Willson

Tirzah's memoirs of the war continue: "We visited our brothers when training in Staunton, taking baskets of food and eating dinner with them. We went to see the 16-year-old boys the day before they marched away. All were cheerful but one, a mother's boy and undersized. He looked to be about 12 years old, named Jimmy Lambert. My heart bled for him. I told brother Clarence goodbye without a tear. He was eager and manly looking, wearing a black mustache. But tears came for Jimmy. He was captured at the first battle and taken to a prison at Baltimore (Ft. Delaware). He became very ill, even his brother, Capt. John Lambert, also a prisoner, was not allowed to see him. He died in a few days. This incident haunts me yet.

"Clarence Willson had answered the call for the 16-year-old boys and fought in the battle of Piedmont [near New Hope on June 5, 1864] in Captain Marquis company under Gen. Imboden. Clarence distinguished himself in this action and was promoted from a private to a lieutenant in the field. The South fought a losing battle that day and in the general retreat one field piece was abandoned. Clarence rallied some of his comrades and put this cannon into action and served it to such good purpose—aiming the piece himself—that three guns of the opposing artillery were dismantled. Then in the face of a general advance he brought up the remaining horses and the riders were instantly killed. He took his two horses from the caisson and limbered it to the cannon and replaced the killed leaders with the two other horses. Just then the lead horse was hit but not knocked down and the men hesitated to mount him. Clarence finally drove the team off, dodging trees, etc. through woods.

"Another brother, David Blackwood Willson, volunteered at the beginning of hostilities and went out with the West Augusta Guard. He fought through the entire Civil War. Was twice captured but never wounded. The boys kept up fine spirits. One time lying on Cheat Mountain, rolled in their blankets, sleeping a dreamless sleep, the snow falling silently, covered them. When reveille sounded young Brooks [an Asa Brooks was mentioned in a letter to Tirzah from Clarence] rising at the sound called out, 'Resurrection Morning, boys.' Brother Dave and Milton were taken prisoners on Cheat Mountain. When the war closed they were



*Tirzah Willson and Brown Patterson were married during the Civil War. These photographs were taken about the time that the pair were newlyweds.*

in prison at Ft. Elmira, N. Y. Brother Dave was given full liberty of the prison.

"We wrote letters to our boys all along the route, nearly to Washington, beginning at Culpeper Court House. Sister Mary and I undertook to make a suit for a soldier. The ladies were equipping a company. Perplexed over the work, we carried it to a neighbor's where with her help we finished it."

Not only did Tirzah have to worry about brothers and cousins who might be killed in the war, but also her husband. Tirzah's husband, William Brown Patterson (called Brown), had been orphaned in early youth and was sent with a thousand dollars to live with his eldest sister and her husband, Hugh G. Guthrie. His double first cousin, Hugh Brown Craig, a nephew of Mr. Guthrie's, came into the family at the same time. The boys walked to school at Stuarts Draft daily.

"There [in Stuarts Draft] Brown met the little brown-eyed Tirzah Willson," writes their son, Brown Craig.

Later both boys attended the classical school under Dr. Robert L. Dabney in the schoolhouse (no longer standing) built for him at Barterbrook, and were sent to Washington College (now Washington & Lee University).<sup>(3)</sup> The war crisis approached and in 1861 Brown Patterson volunteered with a company of Augusta boys "to go meet John Brown and his negroes and demagogues." That same year Mr. Guthrie, the brother-in-law who had raised him, brought him home and replaced him with a substitute soldier for a thousand dollars. The man promptly deserted and Brown went back into service and fought through the war.

"W. B. Patterson, my husband to be, joined Stuart's cavalry. The command did a great deal of scouting. They were in Maryland one time and finding a nice

house empty were glad to hide their horses and billet themselves there for the night. They were hungry and one of the men went to the garden and finding a large onion divided it into four pieces, giving Patterson one. Patterson said he never had tasted anything so good. (He never would eat them at home.) Later he left the cavalry, came home and transacted some business, married and joined the infantry. He fought around Richmond and near the close of the war was wounded. His thumb was shot off and the ball cracked off a piece of his thigh bone and cut his musket in two. This occurred when he jumped a trench into which Union soldiers had filtered."

Tirzah and Brown were married during the war. She went to live with the Guthrie family while her husband was off fighting.

One wartime letter remains from Tirzah's husband, Brown Patterson, written Feb. 12, 1865 (modern punctuation supplied):

Dear Tirzah,

I have got back to camp again. We left camp last Thursday night about three o'clock, got back last night a while before midnight. We were out lying through the woods watching the Yankees. We seen some Yankees but we did not move as our object was to find out their movements. They moved their lines yesterday evening about night. Went back. Some think there is a big move on hand. We are throwing up breast works all through here, have throwed up about three or four miles last week, have about one thousand men at work don't know how far they are to be extended. Most of the soldiers wants the negroes put in the army. I was opposed to it at first have changed my mind. I believe that is the shortest way to end the war. So I hope they may put in every one between the age of 18 to 45. After seeing what our commissiners done, about think the war can't stop untill we are starved out. It seems to be the object of our ruler to prolong the war if posable. I have no ideah that we got the true statements of what past between our commisiners and Abe Linkon. They found they could not get what they wanted or concluded they would put a stop to the pease question. I judg this from there actions here to fore with the account of it in the northern papers. I have about come to the conclusion to be a war man. I want every one to get there fill of it and think with God's protection I can stand it as long as anyone else, but have no ideah we will ever get our independence unless providence shows very plainly it is his hand and not ours. I seen Jim Coyner yestrday. He says Casper was not in the fight. Tell Mary Jane the old stone wall run as usual [the Stonewall Brigade]. It is so. She was sending me word that she wanted her old man's name to stay on the old stone wall roal. I sent her word that I never wanted my name on that roal. It has fallen from grace. Gen. Lee gives Pegrams Brigade the prase in last Monday fight. I feel like we lost the only offiser we had that was any account. He was a nice man, made himself free with every one and a fine offiser. He was killed while trying to rallie some north caliner troops. Col. Hufmin had his foot takin off. The papers say he is dead. It is not so. He was living Friday. I hope he may get well but never want him in command any more. Col. Casy has command of the Brigade. It is said that he is a coward. I know nothing about him. His Reg. had a bad reputation. Our little caption will be cortmarsheld in a short time for cowardice.

He will be put in ranks. I pity his Mother more than him. The boys here say he always would run in a fight. He is a rite clever little feller but had no business in command of a company. He was promoted a short [time] since to Capt. It will be a come down on him pore feller. I hope Sid Moffett has got home before this. If so, you can get all the knews from him. We had fine surmin from Mr. Lepps [?] today. He went on to show how much we kneeded a Savior and what a grate thing it is to have one in times of troble, made his discourse very plain. I have had no word from my Calvery exchange yet. I wroat to John Patterson to push it up. If I don't hear from some of them soon I intend to write to [?] for calvilry. You wanted to know if I could not get home on a meat detail. I tried to get one but it plaid out before I could get one. I did not intend you to know anything about it. I was afraid it would fail and did not want to disappoint you. Would rather surprise you. Bill Shiry, Pelter and Clint Hall were here today. They are all well. John Churchmin is in the hospittle. Bob Cochran has bin sent to North Ca Hospital. I forgot to send Bettie's card in my last. Will try and not forget this time. I would not have written today but afraid I would not have time tomorrow. Will stop and finish in the morning. My love to you all. Tell the darkies howdy. Kiss Bettie. I would like to see her very much not only her but you and the rest from your ever affec. husband Mr. Patterson [The Bettie he refers to is Bettie Evans Patterson, his daughter, who was born in 1863.]

"Now just a note to make my story plain. Mr. Guthrie, Brown Patterson's brother-in-law, into whose home I came when I married, had taken his nephew, Hugh Brown Craig, to educate. Mr. Guthrie's wife [Brown's older sister, Bettie] had the sole charge of her younger brother. So they decided to take the two boys who were first cousins, and educate them. They were educated at Washington & Lee [then Washington College]. They were like brothers. Hugh Brown Craig was just starting a professorship in South Carolina when he volunteered. He came home from his command a couple of days and while there told me of his girl in South Carolina. Asked me to mail a bundle of letters to her that he had wrapped. She was afraid of the fortunes of war and asked me to make him a pair of gloves from a Yankee overcoat. One evening I was seated, busy making his gloves when I saw a boy coming up the road at a gallop. I said to myself, 'There is sad news for someone.' I watched until he turned into our house. How my heart sank! He bore a telegram from Dr. Craig to his uncle Guthrie telling of the fight at Cold Harbor and Hugh Brown Craig being killed."(4)

An obituary notice from some unknown source, also found among Tirzah's papers, read:

HUGH BROWN CRAIG, Adjutant of Edgar's Battalion fell mortally wounded at daylight and died at 10 o'clock, P.M. on the 3rd of June 1864, near Cold Harbor, below Richmond, in the 27th year of his age.

He was by the colors, waving his sword in the face of the enemy on the Parapet, cheering and encouraging his men to stand by their works. Two balls pierced his body, under his uplifted arm. The color-bearer was killed by his side, while slapping his flag in the enemy's faces—and the Colonel was knocked down and wounded with a bayonet. Amiable, noble, high-toned, he was loved by all who knew him in life. In his death, he is sadly, tenderly mourned by many, many friends. His blood was paid as part of the price of liberty.



*Hugh Brown Craig, left, and William Brown Patterson were double first cousins who were raised together by the Guthrie family. The boys went to school together and both fought in the war. Craig was killed in June 1864 at Battle of Cold Harbor.*

"The body was to be brought here the next Sunday," Tirzah's memoirs continue. "The carriage did not go to church, but I started on horseback, falling in with several horseback riders. As we neared the hill above the church [Tinkling Spring Presbyterian, near Fishersville], cannonading commenced in the battle at Piedmont. Without a word spoken we turned our horses and came home."

One letter from Hugh Brown Craig remains, written to his cousin, Brown Patterson, [Tirzah's husband] from Edgar's Battalion, July 5th, 1863:

Dear Brown:

Today is so stormy that everyone stays at home, unless they are obliged to go out, so I am not troubled with business.

We are still quartered in Centerville, Monroe Co., nearly all of our men are in houses, though they are crowded. The Col. and I have a room, the Maj. is out in a tent. Our room is a very healthy one. We don't suffer for want of fresh air. We have very little reason to complain however, for we are doing well enough for soldiers.

We were brought here to guard a road which leads to the narrows of New River, and was unprotected. The 22nd Reg't is ordered to move today to Bunyan's mill, five miles west of Lewisburg, and the 45th to Pack's Ferry, eighteen miles to our left. The 22nd will try to get permission to stay in Lewisburg and as the weather is so bad, it will probably be granted. I stopped about an hour with Alex Humphreys as we came



over from Lewisburg. He sent his respects to Uncle, said he would like to hear from him. He bought a farm from Burns some time ago. It lies on this side of Union, is very good land. He has not many cattle on hand. Cattle are scarce. Everything is very scarce and high here. After paying all expenses, we have very little left. We would have gone into Camp before this, but the weather has been so bad that we c'd not build cabins. We will not move now unless ordered to do so. You will find in my big pocket book a list of some accounts that I left with J. L. Demille of Tall. for collection. Please send me a copy of it, give a copy of all on the paper. I am afraid that if I don't get that money soon, that I will not get it at all. What are you doing this winter? Has Uncle sent his cattle off yet? I suppose he will make a good deal on them, as everything has gone up considerably since they were bought. Have you any?

I had a notion to buy a stallion that I saw here a few days ago. He is of very good stock and is a very good horse, is a sorrel and very much like the sorrel you had last spring, but is better color. By standing him, he w'd pay for himself in one season. But that kind of stock is usually very troublesome. The man that is going from here to Goshen, will not start before the last of next week or the week after. How are horses selling in Augusta now? Give my love to Uncle, Aunt and Tirzah, also to Ma. Remember me to the servants. How are Lee and Aaron getting on? Write soon and give the copy of accounts. Truly Yr's H.B. Craig

Tirzah's account continues, "My husband and brother Clarence with many friends were there [at the Battle at Piedmont on June 5, 1864]. I walked the path from house to gate back and forth. Every sound of the cannon fell on my heart like lead. Then Dr. Newton Craig came with his brother's body. His mother and sister came with other friends. I was desperate. I went to the kitchen to Aunt Nancy, the cook, saying 'Aunt Nancy, give me something to do or I'll go crazy.' She was very sympathetic, and said, 'Well, honey, if you will just set the table, it's Sarah's day out. Make the table as long as you can, there'll be many to supper.' I had just finished setting the table when a friend came to say that Mr. Robert Moffett had just come from the battlefield and that we had lost and that Yankees would come through here the next day. He said he left all our friends well. The enemy came through but were in too big a hurry to do much damage. We had moved the stock. They took three big silver spoons off the dining room table, one changed his old hat for Mr. Guthrie's new one and they took Aunt Nancy's sugar that I'd given her before we put the rest in hiding, for which she berated them. One stole a kiss from the colored maid, but they soon left, afraid to tarry."

Another letter from the time of the Civil War found in Tirzah's effects came from her brother Clarence, written from Camp Monticello, Sept. 19th, 1864, largely thanking her for the box of food that she had sent and which had arrived the day before. He was particularly appreciative because it had come as something of a surprise. He recounted a picnic at Camp Monticello with several ladies from Staunton invited down. They had a nice dinner and "danced all night." He spoke of an officer that he liked, though he was very strict, and required all the officers to recite lessons to him out of Gilham's Tactics every day.

Tirzah's account nears its conclusion with a description of life on the homefront during the war:

"We lived in physical comfort at Mr. Guthrie's. He had received a present of a bag of green coffee from Brazil just before the war started. That with the farm, sheep, cattle, chickens enabled us to live well.

"There was no organization to gather food for the armies in our county. They impressed horses for service as well as hay and corn to feed them. Old men were appointed to visit the wives of soldiers and see that they were taken care of. I had a lovely home. Mr. Guthrie kept an open house and a welcome to every soldier, refugee, traveler, businessman, teacher from the Theological School, etc. We occupied ourselves sending boxes to the soldiers, knitting for them. I plaited straw for hats. The negro boys shaped them on crocks and they answered the purpose. If they were too large a tight band, if too small a stretch.

"I read almost every book in Mr. Guthrie's library, even Baxter's 'Saint's Rest.' Near the close of the war Mr. Guthrie's fine four-horse team and its driver, negro Jim, was impressed to take a load of hay to the army in Richmond. This was soon after Lee's surrender and friends thought he would never see Jim, horses, or wagon again. It would have been so easy for him to sell and pocket the money. No doubt he would be advised to go north. Mr. Guthrie expected him to return and one evening a week after surrender he came driving in, everything in good order and glad to get home. Of course we'd hidden everything when we were expecting the enemy. I put ten yards of fine calico, for which I had paid a hundred dollars a yard (Confederate money) into a bustle and no one was the wiser.

"The news of Lee's surrender was not unexpected. There was no reason to feel ashamed, for the South had fought gallantly, with great heroism. The best blood in the South was shed. There was no humility, simply tragedy. Some time after the surrender we felt worse off than any people ever were at the close of a war. The Northern generals were not all the men they should have been in gentlemanly conduct. General Hunter reported to his commanding officer that he did not leave enough in the Valley to keep life in a kildee flying over it. Barns and houses were burnt, all foodstuff destroyed, no livestock or fences were left. But we found the tyranny of reconstruction was far worse. Yet there was not one word of complaint. Waste places were built up. There were men ready to put their hands to whatever was needed for reclamation.

*Just to keep sweet after tasting the bitter,  
Just to keep on when the way is steep,  
These are the lessons life has to teach us.*

Brown came home to his family with malaria and money all swept away in Confederate currency. Mr. Guthrie let him have two hundred acres of his land lying just west of Round Hill, near what used to be called Barterbrook on the road from Fishersville to Stuarts Draft (Rt. 608). He built a house, stable and barn and was a frugal and hard-working farmer and businessman. Unfortunately, he died at the age of fifty-three, leaving Tirzah a widow for thirty-eight years.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>The Battle of Kernstown was fought on March 23, 1862. It was to be the only military loss Stonewall Jackson ever suffered. John's death was felt throughout the tight-knit community. Local Presbyterian minister, Francis McFarland, recorded in his diary of going to comfort John's widow, Margaret, as well as her family, the Alexander Brownlees.

<sup>2</sup>Tirzah's memory of these events almost sixty years later is somewhat faulty. In reality, Jackson received his nickname of "Stonewall" at the Battle of First Manassas fought on July 21, 1861.

<sup>3</sup>Dabney, a Presbyterian minister at Tinkling Spring and schoolteacher in Augusta County before the war, became Stonewall Jackson's chief-of-staff.

<sup>4</sup>The Battle of Cold Harbor was June 3, 1864.

*Information in this account, not from Tirzah's original account, was taken from my grandfather, Brown Craig Patterson's unpublished genealogical records. He grew up in the family home near Barterbrook, attended Washington & Lee University, Union Theological Seminary, and went to China in 1891 under the Presbyterian Church, U.S. to serve as an evangelistic missionary. He retired to the old home place in 1939. He met his wife, the former Annie Houston from Fincastle, Virginia, a medical missionary, as one of the contingent that went to China. They spent forty-nine years there, raising five children, my mother, Margaret Patterson Mack, being the youngest and only girl.*

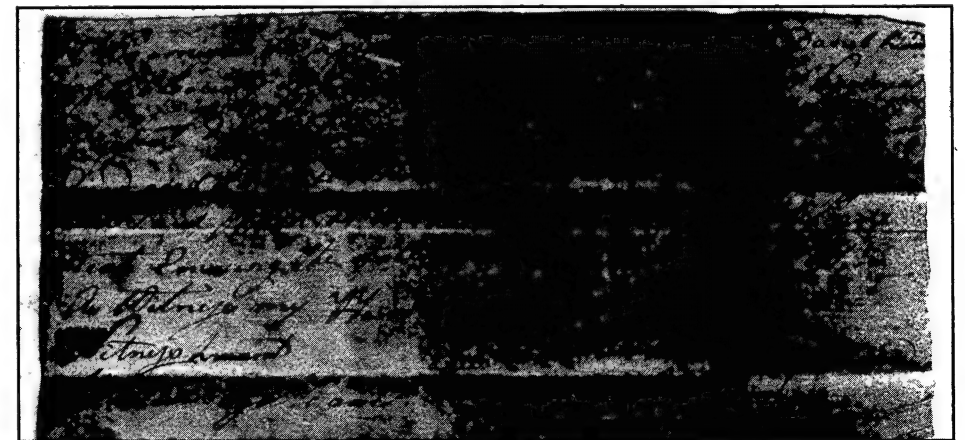
Patricia Mack Churchman  
Bridgewater, Virginia

## Daniel Boone in Augusta County

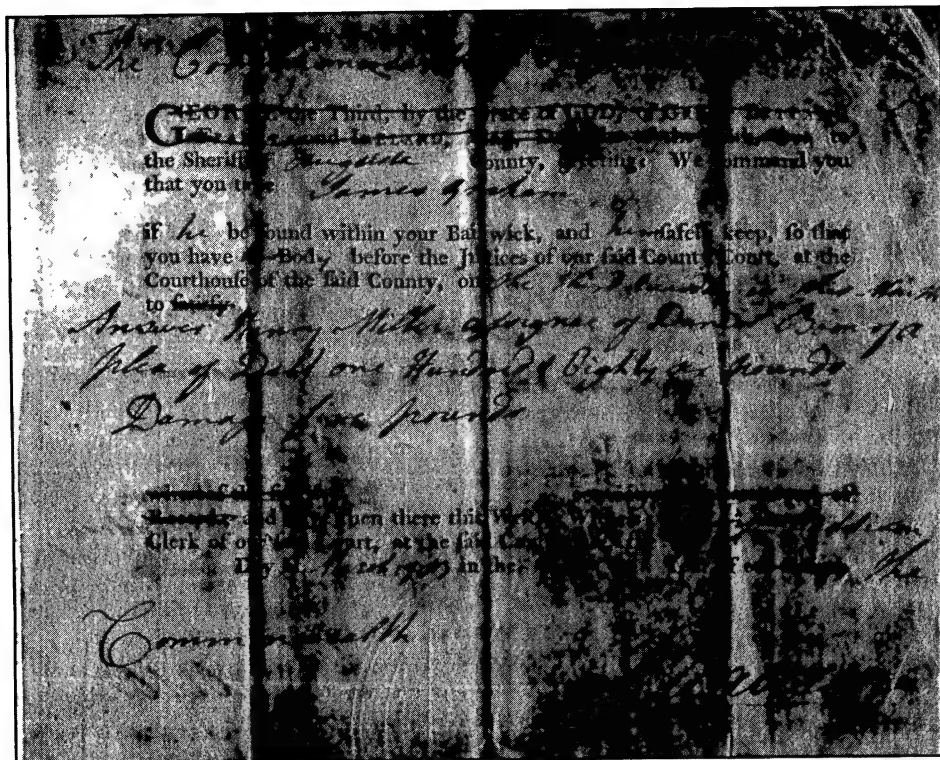
For more than a year now, James Madison University students have been working on an historical project in the basement of the Augusta County courthouse. Their charge is to clean, organize, preserve, and index the seventy-nine drawers of office judgments that span the time period from 1745 to 1800. The judgments are a variety of decisions handed down by the Augusta County court. For 200 years the papers were stored in the old metal drawers where they had been folded and compressed with tight string bands. Each bundle is now being carefully opened and analyzed. The work is slow with literally tens of thousands of pieces of paper being looked at through the course of the project.

Most days spent in the basement are routine, but once in a while the students stumble across a real jewel. That's exactly what happened one day when student Stephanie Holyfield unfolded the Miller vs. Graham bundle of papers from the early 1780s. As she read through the casework, she suddenly realized she was staring at a signature of "Daniel Boone." Making the discovery doubly intriguing is the fact that the case also involved Henry Miller, the proprietor of the Mossy Creek ironworks in northern Augusta County. It has long been suspected that Miller and Daniel Boone were cousins and acquaintances. This case involved a debt of £186 pounds that a man named James Graham had agreed to pay Daniel Boone. Henry Miller was acting as Daniel Boone's assignee, which means he was appointed by Boone to represent him and collect the debt.

Just because the signature said Daniel Boone, however, did not prove that this was the same Daniel Boone of American backwoods fame. That Daniel Boone--of the coonskin cap variety--was born in 1735 in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. He first moved to Kentucky in 1769. Knowing this biographical detail strengthened the case for this signature belonging to the same Boone. The Boone mentioned in the court case was described as Daniel Boone of "the County of Caintucky." Kentucky at that time was still a Virginia county. Kentucky County



*This is a photocopy of the actual promissory note where James Graham promises to pay "unto Daniel Boon of the County of Caintucky" £186 pounds.*



This slip of paper, "recycled" from Virginia's colonial period, was meant to insure James Graham's appearance in court.

was formed in 1776 from Fincastle County. The county became extinct in November 1789 when it was divided into Fayette, Jefferson and Lincoln counties. Kentucky became a separate territory in 1790 and was admitted to the Union in 1792.

Still not totally convinced, Ms. Holfield went to the library and checked out a biography of Daniel Boone. She looked at several images of known Daniel Boone signatures and compared them with the Augusta County example. They were exact matches! She knew then that she had a real find--THE real Daniel Boone had visited Augusta County.

Transcriptions of the pertinent documents are listed next. Keep in mind that these eighteenth-century writers had very few dictionaries or spelling rules to go by and words are often spelled phonetically.

The first document, a 1780 promissory note, is the one with the Boone signature.

I Promise to pay or caus to be paid unto Daniel Boon of the County of Caintucky and Comenwlth of Virginia The Just & full Sum of one Hundred and Eighty Six pounds Good and Lawful Money of Virginia to be paid Unto The Said Boon at or apon the Twenty fifth of June next Ensuing the state Hereof for the Value Red. of him. As Witness my Hand this 8th day of April 1780 --

Jas. Graham

Witness present  
William Gilham

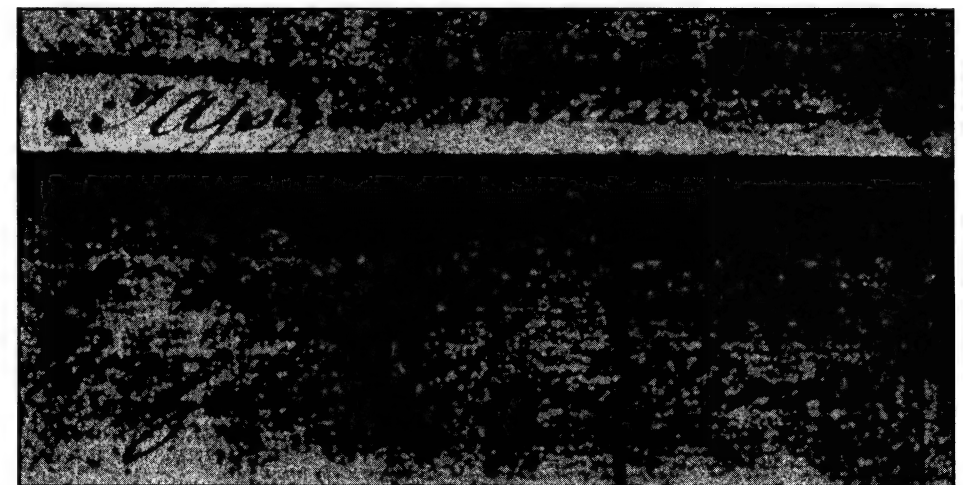
On the back of this document is this short statement with "the signature:"

I assign the within to Sum of £186.0.0 to Mr. Henry Miller  
William Gilham Daniel Boone

A second document in the packet was a fill-in-the-blank form ordering the Augusta County sheriff to find James Graham and see that he makes good on his debt. This document is interesting because it was obviously printed when Virginia was still a British colony, but the clerk of court had simply scratched through "George the Third, by the Grace of GOD, of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, King, Defender of the Faith," and had written in "The Commonwealth of Virginia" thereby making this 1783 document read as follows:

The Commonwealth of Virginia to the Sheriff of Augusta County, greeting: We command you that you take James Graham if he be found within your Bailiwick, and him safely keep, so that you have his body before the Justices of our said County Court, at the Courthouse of the said County, on the third tuesday in this Month to Answer Henry Miller assignee of Daniel Boon of a plea of Debt one Hundred & Eighty six pounds  
Damage five pounds  
and have then there this Writ. Witness Richard Maddison Clerk of our said Court, at the said Courthouse, the 10th Day of March 1783 in the 7th Year of the Commonwealth  
R Madison

It is a find like this that keeps history exciting for everyone. And, it also helps continue to secure Augusta County's place as an important one in the annals of American history.



The matching signature - When this Daniel Boone signature, written on the back of the promissory note, matched known examples of the famous Daniel Boone's signature, the JMU student knew she was dealing with the real McCoy.



# Middlebrook gets state highway historical marker

*The following text is excerpted from a speech written by Nancy Sorrells and delivered by Betty Jo Hamilton during the dedication ceremony for the new highway historical marker held on Saturday, November 27, 1999. The year marked the 200th anniversary of the village.*

Imagine, if you will, a spring day here 200 years ago. This road was right there, but it was dirt and probably uneven and perhaps deeply rutted from the hooves of livestock and wagon wheels. Tradition says there might have been a building or two already here along this main road through the county but certainly not the clusters of structures you see today. There might have been stakes driven in the ground and connected by string to delineate rectangular tracts of land. Despite its emptiness, however, there would have been a special air of excitement that spring morning in 1799, for with the stroke of a pen the village of Middlebrook was being formed.

It was a planned community that had been a year in the making - and William and Nancy Scott were here because land was gold in the Shenandoah Valley and this was their land. This tract of land, originally part of William Beverley's grant, was first sold to David Cunningham in 1749. Then Andrew and Thomas Scott acquired it. In 1798 they deeded it to William and Nancy Scott. Seizing the opportunity along what was already an established transportation route from Staunton to Brownsburg, William Scott laid out a number of lots along the road in 1798.

And so it was that on April 16, 1799, twenty-six lots were sold off in this newly planned community. The young country of the United States was still using pounds, shillings, and pence as well as dabbling in dollars and cents. Thus the sale prices are recorded in both denominations. The smallest lot near the edge of town brought two pounds, while Samuel McCutcheon paid thirty pounds for his. The lot next to Samuel's and the one across from him commanded a whopping fifty dollars each. These high-priced lots may also have had some sort of building on them, otherwise they would not have brought such a large sum.

The purchasers were, for the most part, family members of some of the area's earliest Scots-Irish and German settlers. In addition to the McCutcheons, there were Ewings, McChesneys, and Wilsons - all good Scots-Irish. There were also Sensabaughs, Bossermans, Bumgardners, and Fulwidars, good German names; and a few English names: Martin, Summers, and Lowman.

The name of Middlebrook had already been decided upon when the town was platted and recorded in the Augusta County deedbooks. But just how the area residents arrived at that name is open to debate. There are, in fact, at least three stories to explain the name. The oldest comes from Augusta County historian Joseph Waddell who mentioned some rather vague story about this brook coming right out of the middle of the land where the waters divide - half going south to the James and half going north to the Shenandoah.



*Rasmiselle's Store*



*Two business scenes from Middlebrook of days gone by. (Photo courtesy the Rosen Family and See-KWA! Publishing)*

Then there is the McCutcheon family story which says that William McCutcheon, as a young lad in George Washington's army, spent a winter in 1777-1778 stationed in Middlebrook, New Jersey. "Elder Billy" as he was later called, liked the name and gave it to this new village which was nearby to his home.

The third story, found in a Middlebrook newspaper of the early twentieth century, is a statement of the obvious - that the Scotts named the village Middlebrook because it has, yes indeed, a brook running through the middle of it. Back Creek to be exact.

Perhaps the truth lies in a combination of the three. Maybe the Scotts were laying off the lots for their new village and Elder Billy and a few others happened by. A discussion ensued about what to name this new place - should it be for the scenic landscape? Say Hillsborough. How about for the proprietors? Say Scottsville. Or maybe for the creek running through the village? Say Brookside, or Back Creek. Then Elder Billy piped up saying he recollected a place he had stayed in twenty years ago called Middlebrook....

However the village was named, it prospered. Move forward in time a few months after the sale of lots to a late November day in 1799, like today, and this place must have been swarming with activity. Cattle and pigs would have been driven on this road to market, travelers would have been passing through and there probably would have been the ring of hammers and saws as people were putting the finishing touches on new homes and stores.

Within three or four years there were a number of large dwellings and stores and a "lodging room." Growth was so rapid that in 1805 the Scotts had platted and sold off another set of back lots. By 1836 there were 150 people living here in thirty dwelling houses. There was also one interdenominational church, a school, a tavern, three stores, a tanyard, two tailors, one cabinetmaker, one cooper, one carpenter, one wheelwright and two boot and shoe factories!

The next big jump in growth came as a result of this road. Although the road had always gone through here and was the reason for the village's existence, in 1851 the Middlebrook and Brownsburg Turnpike Company was established. The road was improved and macadamized, which means putting a packed rock surface down. And a toll was charged- the turnpike company was a for-profit enterprise. The numbers of stagecoaches and mail carriers as well as everyday travelers jumped significantly as soon as the road was improved. By 1855 Middlebrook had doubled in size to sixty dwellings.

Prosperity continued unabated in the 1880s when the village was one of the most "enterprising and prosperous villages in the county." In fact, it was the LARGEST village in Augusta County with 274 inhabitants. One of the reasons for such success was John S. McCorkle's "thrifty, enterprising, pleasant, and attractive" mercantile business. Another reason was that the village was a crossroads in the center of some prime agricultural land. Middlebrook was the business center for the farmers in the southern part of the county.

Around 1900, Middlebrook was a happening place. There was a community league, a modern school campus, a community band, a furniture factory, three doctors, five undertakers (did it take that many undertakers to keep up with the doctors?), taverns (including Frank Arehart's House of Entertainment) and more businesses than you could shake a stick at. There was even a



*Clowning around in downtown Middlebrook earlier in the twentieth century. (Photo courtesy of the Rosen Family and See-KWA! Publishing)*

prosperous African-American community with its own school and church that was part of the village.

Then something happened. The world changed. Transportation changed. Although Middlebrook had pushed hard to get the B&O railroad, it had actually gone farther east through Greenville. The Valley Turnpike which went through that other village also gained the upper hand over this turnpike. And so Middlebrook became almost a time capsule, frozen in its 1880s-1920s heyday. Gradually as growth and sprawl took over in other places, Middlebrook also became unique a breath of fresh air straight from the past. In 1980 the village was honored for its uniqueness by being placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The entire village was nominated and accepted on the list as an historic district.

And appearances can be deceiving. Middlebrook may appear to be a sleepy little village frozen in time, but the residents can still produce a "beehive of activity" when prompted. Take this historical marker for instance. When a couple of residents led by Ruby Rosen and Bill Brubeck hit upon the idea of having a historic highway marker placed in the village in honor of Middlebrook's bicentennial they were not to be stopped. Everybody has seen these markers scattered all over the state. They reasoned that Middlebrook was just as historic as those other places and deserved a marker.

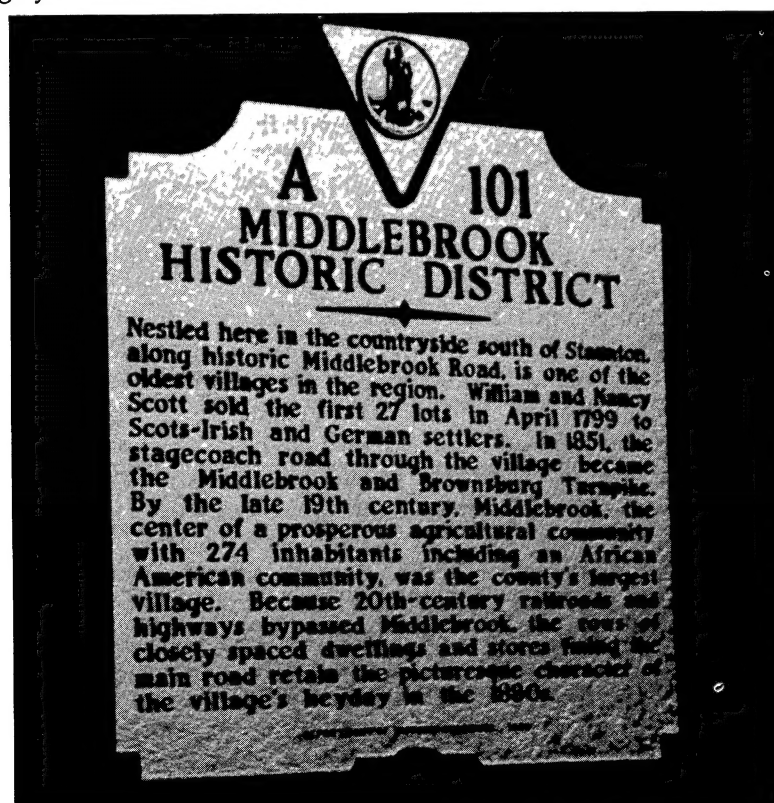
So how does one get a marker? You don't just call up the marker factory and order one. Instead a representative of the Augusta County Historical Society, Nancy Sorrells, was called for advice. Getting a marker is not easy - and it is

a tribute to the energy of this community that there is a marker standing here just nine months after the idea of kicked around in Brubeck's Hardware Store.

The first step was to research and write the text for the marker - keeping it to about 130 words (that's way less than one word for each year of Middlebrook's existence), provide location maps for the marker, send letters of recommendation, and come up with a substantial amount of money. The whole proposal package had to be submitted to a review board at the Virginia Department of Historic Resources twice, first for a preliminary read through and then for the final evaluation. The text for the marker went back and forth four times for final editing and tweaking, but finally in September the village learned that the marker was going to be a reality.

From Richmond, the text had to be sent to the "marker factory" where the sign was cast in iron, a process that takes six weeks. Then the second state agency, the Virginia Department of Transportation, picked up the ball and oversaw the placement of the marker. The people at both state agencies, Larry Curry with VDOT and Katherine Long, with Historic Resources, made the job easy. Even with all that work, this marker would not have been a reality without the sponsorship of the Middlebrook Ruritan Club and the generosity of the area residents.

The community should be proud of this marker. When those first lots were sold 200 years ago it was the start of something special. The people here have always known that this place is unique and now with this marker, any visitor coming by will know that as well.



## Presidents of the Augusta County Historical Society

\*Dr. Richard P. Bell, 1964-1966  
\*Harry Lee Nash, Jr., 1966-1967  
\*Dr. Marshall M. Brice, 1967-1968  
\*Dr. James Sprunt, 1968-1970  
\*Richard M. Hamrick, Jr., 1970-1972  
+Joseph B. Yount III, 1972-1974  
\*Mrs. William Bushman, 1974-1976  
\*John M. Dunlap, Jr., 1976-1977  
Miss Mary Kathryn Blackwell, 1977-1979  
Mrs. Harry D. Hevener, 1979-1981  
John M. McChesney, Jr., 1981-1983  
Mrs. John E. True, 1983-1985  
Edgar R. Coiner, 1985-1987  
Charles R. Chittum, 1987-1989  
\*Mrs. William B. Patterson, 1989-1991  
\*R. Fontaine McPherson, Jr., 1991-1993  
Dr. James B. Patrick, 1993-1995  
Dr. Ann McCleary, 1995-1997  
Dr. Katharine L. Brown, 1997-1999

\*Charter Member of Society  
+Honorary Charter Member

